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ONE HUNDRED TENTH CONGRESS

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## House of Representatives

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February 25, 2008

The Honorable Robert M. Gates  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Defense  
1000 Defense Pentagon  
Washington, DC 20301

Dear Mr. Secretary:

We are writing to ask that you take several steps on behalf of wounded members of the National Guard, the Reserves, and their families.

The National Guard provides up to 50% of the deployed operational military force for the United States, but they face distinct hurdles that members of the active duty military do not. Members of the National Guard do not return home to bases filled with comrades, easily accessible services, records, and avenues of medical treatment. They go back to civilian life, where responsibilities of employment and family are immediate, and where assistance with military and veterans medical issues may seem remote.

We appreciate that the Defense Department has begun to recognize the specific challenges faced by members of military returning home with severe mental and physical injuries. But we have concerns that the Department's new policies do not adequately address the unique needs of National Guard members and their families or appropriately resource essential support services. The increase of personnel dedicated to wounded service members at medical treatment facilities and active duty bases is commendable, but there remains a tremendous need for personnel to assist National Guard members where they live and report, in their states, and at their state headquarters. Unfortunately, the Department's current outreach to the Guard community is not deep, and coordination with the National Guard Bureau is inadequate.

For these reasons, we ask that you take several specific steps:

First, we ask that you support and fund a comprehensive, standardized psychological health care program for members of the National Guard. The urgency of this request is underscored by a recent study by the Department of Veterans Affairs finding that Guard and

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SECRETARY OF THE  
NAVY

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The Honorable Robert M. Gates  
February 25, 2008  
Page 2

Reserve members accounted for 53% of veteran suicides from 2001 to 2005.<sup>1</sup> We understand that the National Guard Bureau has proposed to Dr. David Chu, Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, a program to place a Director of Psychological Health at each of the 54 joint state Guard headquarters to act as focal points for coordinating and addressing the mental health care needs of the National Guard. Given the severity of this problem, we ask that you support and fund this program and these mental health specialists without further delay.

Second, we ask that you support dedicated funding to provide Transitional Assistance Advisors (TAA) in every state. The purpose of the TAA program is to provide a person in each state or territory to assist service members in accessing treatment, benefits, assistance with obtaining TRICARE entitlements, and access to community and state resources. Since its inception in 2005, the TAA program has been an essential service to the Guard community. Unlike the new personnel positions that are being provided to active duty bases and medical treatment facilities, the Department, the Army, and the Air Force do not include this program in their annual budgets, forcing the National Guard to fund the program in a piecemeal fashion. We believe this program should have dedicated Defense Department funding.

Third, we urge you to immediately execute provisions of the National Defense Authorization Act of 2008 to implement the *Beyond the Yellow Ribbon Program*. Congress created this program to establish a national network of transition support workers to help members of all components who do not live near military installations successfully move to civilian status. This national reintegration effort is intended to focus specifically on providing members of the Reserve Components with counseling on family, employment, education, and other transition issues. For these reasons, Congress designated your office as executive agent for securing funding for this program, and it was Congress' intent to have the National Guard Bureau act as the day-to-day manager of the national program. On behalf of the thousands of Guard and Reserve members who will be served by this program, we ask that you implement it immediately.

Finally, we ask that you support dedicated funding for the proper inclusion of human resources staff at National Guard state headquarters in all departmental initiatives. Patient tracking and the flow of personnel and medical information is vital to wounded Guard members and their families. Stove-piped, paper-bound, and non-standardized systems cause information to cascade down to state Guard headquarters in haphazard and detrimental ways that create immense difficulties for Guard members and their families. Lack of IT connectivity will continue to cause errors that affect the timeliness of benefits and treatment. Lack of dedicated funding for standardized training of National Guard human resources staff in new medical administrative procedures and programs at Guard state headquarters will continue to undermine the effectiveness of well-intentioned Departmental efforts.

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<sup>1</sup> See, e.g., *Suicide by Guard, Reserve Troops Studied*, Associated Press (Feb. 12, 2008).

The Honorable Robert M. Gates  
February 25, 2008  
Page 3

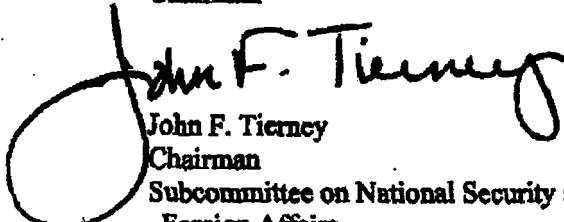
We believe the nation has made a solemn commitment to all military service members, including those citizen-soldiers in the National Guard who have served our country with honor and at great sacrifice. For this reason, we hope that you will support our efforts to make good on that promise. We look forward to hearing from you.

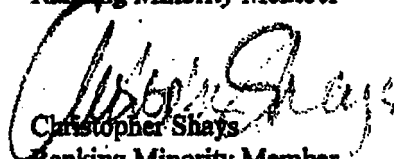
If you or your staff have any questions, please contact David Rapallo with the Majority office at (202) 225-5420 or Grace Washbourne with the Minority office at (202) 225-5074.

Sincerely,


  
Henry A. Waxman  
Chairman

  
Tom Davis  
Ranking Minority Member

  
John F. Tierney  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on National Security and  
Foreign Affairs

  
Christopher Shays  
Ranking Minority Member  
Subcommittee on National Security and  
Foreign Affairs

  
Bruce L. Braley  
Member of Congress

  
Todd Russell Platts  
Member of Congress

cc: General H Steven Blum  
Chief, National Guard Bureau

# Congressional

## SECRETARY OF DEFENSE CORRESPONDENCE ROUTING SLIP

Action Agency: **UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR PERSONNEL & READINESS**

Action Required: **PREPARE REPLY FOR SECRETARY OF DEFENSE SIGNATURE**

Coordinate With: **LA**

References:

Remarks:

Document Type: **INCOMING**

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Suspense Date: **March 10 2008**

Routing Date: **February 28 2008**

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OSD 02822-08



# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

April 24, 2008

The Honorable Robert M. Gates  
Secretary of Defense  
United States Department of Defense  
1000 Defense Pentagon  
Washington, D.C. 20301-1000

2008 MAY -2 PM 7:41  
OFFICE OF THE  
SECRETARY OF THE  
DEFENSE

Dear Secretary Gates,

We are writing to thank you for undertaking an important study to determine the most effective means to enhance and improve family support programs for families of the Armed Forces, including families of National Guard and Reserve members, throughout the cycle of deployment. We also request that you provide us with the results of this study as soon as it has been completed by the Department of Defense (DOD).

This study is mandated in Section 583 of H.R. 4986, the *Fiscal Year 2008 National Defense Authorization Act*. The requirement for this study is the result of our efforts to ensure that the spouses and families of National Guard and Reserve members receive the support services they need throughout the cycle of deployment.

As you know, National Guard and Reserve members are serving our country more than ever in the world's most dangerous places, including Iraq and Afghanistan. Many Guard and Reserve units, like the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 133<sup>rd</sup> Infantry of the Iowa National Guard, are facing multiple and extended deployments, resulting in long separations from their families. These long separations often lead to high levels of stress, anxiety, and uncertainty within families, and can put children at risk for depression and behavioral and academic problems.

While all military families face significant challenges throughout the cycle of deployment, Guard and Reserve families are particularly vulnerable because they often live far from military bases and do not have access to many of the services which active duty military families draw upon. As the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan continue, it is imperative that we ensure that Guard and Reserve troops and their families have the support and assistance they need before, during, and after deployment.

We believe that the completion of this study is a critical and necessary step to determining the most effective ways to help military spouses and children, and to ensuring that we provide the best and most comprehensive support for members of the Armed Forces and their families now and in coming years. We also believe that the completion of this study will allow the DOD and Congress to build and improve upon the Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program, which was established in H.R. 4986 to provide

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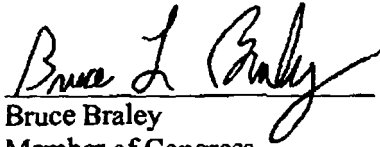
National Guard and Reserve members and their families with sufficient information, services, referrals, and proactive outreach throughout the deployment cycle.

Thank you for your careful attention to this study. We look forward to seeing the results of the Department's study, and to working with you to build upon your findings and your current efforts to provide the best support for military families that our nation can offer.

Sincerely,



Tom Harkin  
United States Senator



Bruce Braley  
Member of Congress

# Congressional

## SECRETARY OF DEFENSE CORRESPONDENCE ROUTING SLIP

Action Agency: **UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR PERSONNEL & READINESS**

Action Required: **REPLY DIRECT - COMPONENT HEAD MUST SIGN**

Coordinate With: **LA**

References:

Remarks:

Document Type: **INCOMING**

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Suspense Date: **May 12 2008**

Routing Date: **May 1 2008**

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**OSD 05725-08**



**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

June 11, 2007

The Honorable Robert Gates  
Secretary of Defense  
1600 Army Pentagon  
Washington, D.C. 20301

Dear Secretary Gates,

We are writing to express our concern with the new Department of Defense (DOD) policy to "recognize" Service members who are required to mobilize or deploy with more frequency than the established DOD rotation policy goals. We are especially concerned about this policy as it relates to the members and families of the Iowa National Guard.

As you know, on April 18, 2007, the DOD announced that members of the Armed Services who are required to deploy or mobilize with a frequency beyond established rotation policy goals (one year deployed to two years at home station for active duty soldiers, and one year deployed to five years at home station for reserve component soldiers) will be rewarded for this hardship with days off, or "administrative absence."

While we agree that soldiers should be compensated when DOD rotation goals are not met, we are concerned that this policy does not adequately reflect the hardships and sacrifices endured by soldiers and their families. While soldiers would be able to "cash in" their administrative leave, the monetary compensation they could accrue from this exchange is not sufficient to make up for lost time at home away from their families, jobs, and businesses, or to make up for the disruption and hardships that are caused by early or extended deployments. In addition, this policy does not provide soldiers and families with sufficient flexibility or timely relief, as administrative leave would become available only after all training and deployment activity is completed, instead of during the time of disruption.

As you are well aware, our nation's National Guard troops are playing an increasing and critical role in our defense missions overseas. The Iowa National Guard alone currently has 850 soldiers serving in Iraq, 70 soldiers serving in Afghanistan, and will deploy at least 750 soldiers in the remaining calendar year of 2007 who could be affected by this new DOD policy. These citizen-soldiers who leave behind families and civilian jobs to serve our country should be duly rewarded for their sacrifices, and deserve adequate compensation if they are required to leave home earlier or stay on the ground longer than anticipated according to DOD rotation goals.

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Enclosure (6)



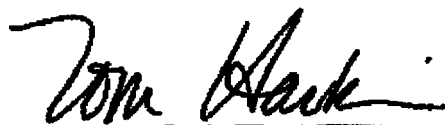
The nation's Adjutants General have universally rejected this policy of compensating soldiers with administrative absence when rotation goals are not met, and have suggested that providing them with a \$1000/month monetary award, such as soldiers currently receive when they are extended beyond twelve months in theatre, would be a more appropriate policy. We urge you to follow their guidance, and we add our voices to their call for you and the DOD to revisit this policy and develop a new compensation package which will adequately compensate our service members and their families for the sacrifices they are making on behalf of our country.

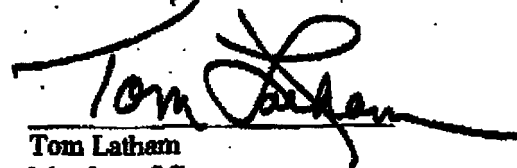
Thank you for your attention to this matter. We look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

  
Bruce Braley  
Member of Congress

  
Charles Grassley  
United States Senator

  
Tom Harkin  
United States Senator

  
Tom Latham  
Member of Congress

  
Leonard Boswell  
Member of Congress

  
Steve King  
Member of Congress

  
Dave Loebsack  
Member of Congress

**FAX from**

CONGRESSMAN BRUCE BRALEY

### ***First District, Iowa***

# FACSIMILE TRANSMITTAL SHEET

**TO:**

The Honorable Robert Nathan

**FROM:**

Iowa Congressional Delegation

**COMPANY:**

**DATE:**

6/11/2007

**FAX NUMBER:**

703-647-8339

**PAGES INCLUDING COVER:**

2

**PHONE NUMBER:**

**REs**

RE: National Guard Compensation policy.

**NOTES/COMMENTS:**

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SECTION	DISPOS	RELEASE	DISPOS	REMARKS
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LA				FILE

CONGRESSMAN BRUCE BRALEY  
1408 LONGWORTH HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20515  
PHONE: (202) 225-2511

# SECRETARY OF DEFENSE CORRESPONDENCE ACTION REPORT

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 Fax (703) 693-7028, Email: SuspenseDesk@whs.mil  
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**TASKED AGENCY**    **UPR**

**SUSPENSE DATE**    **07/05/2007**  
 (MMDDYYYY)

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- ☐ a. ACTION COMPLETED    ☐ COPY ATTACHED    and/o    ☐ SEE JUSTIFICATION BELOW
- ☐ b. REQUEST EXTENSION OF SUSPENSE DATE (MMDDYYYY) TO \_\_\_\_\_ (Justify Below)
- ☐ c. INTERIM REPLY SENT (Attach copy) ; EXTEND SUSPENSE DATE (MMDDYYYY) TO \_\_\_\_\_ (Justify Below)
- ☐ d. REQUEST CANCELLATION (Justify below)
- ☐ e. REQUEST TRANSFER TO \_\_\_\_\_ (Justify below, include POC Name and telephone number)
- ☐ f. REQUEST DOWNGRADE TO \_\_\_\_\_ (Justify Below)

## 2. JUSTIFICATION

## 3. TASKED AGENCY

a. AGENCY NAME  <b>UPR</b>	b. ACTION OFFICER NAME	c. TELEPHONE NUMBER
----------------------------------	------------------------	---------------------

d. DATE (MMDDYYYY)	e. AGENCY APPROVING AUTHORITY SIGNATURE (Service Secretary/Under Secretary/ASD Military/Executive Assistant Level)
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## 4. ACTION TAKEN (For ExecSec/Executive Support Office and Correspondence Control Division Use Only)

- |                          |                                   |                                      |
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| a. ACTION COMPLETED      | <input type="checkbox"/> APPROVED | <input type="checkbox"/> DISAPPROVED |
| b. EXTENSION             | <input type="checkbox"/> APPROVED | <input type="checkbox"/> DISAPPROVED |
| c. CANCELLATION          | <input type="checkbox"/> APPROVED | <input type="checkbox"/> DISAPPROVED |
| d. TRANSFER              | <input type="checkbox"/> APPROVED | <input type="checkbox"/> DISAPPROVED |
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| f. OTHER (Specify below) | <input type="checkbox"/> APPROVED | <input type="checkbox"/> DISAPPROVED |

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**OSD 09712-07**



g. DATE SIGNED (MMDDYYYY)	h. SIGNATURE
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Action Agency: **UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR PERSONNEL & READINESS**

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Coordinate With: **LA SA SAF SN**

References:

Remarks:

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Suspense Date: **July 5 2007**

Routing Date: **June 12 2007**

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**OSD 09712-07**



# SECFILES FULL RECORD DETAIL

Print Date: 6/25/2007

DOCUMENT TYPE: INCOMING  
OSD CONTROL **OSD 09712-07** DOC **6/11/2007** ATTACHMENT: DOR **6/12/2007** SIGNATURE CASE:  
FROM MOC TO SECDEF  
SUBJECT **CONCERN WITH DOD POLICY TO RECOGNIZE MEMBERS WHO ARE REQUIRED TO DEPLOY WITH MORE  
FREQUENCY THAN THE ESTABLISHED DOD ROTATION POLICY**  
KEYWORDS **USS GRASSLEY, C USS HARKIN, T MOC LATHAM, T MOC BOSWELL, L MOC KING, S MOC LOEBSACK, D  
IOWA NATIONAL GUARD**

## COMMENTS

FN **325** SEC U OCN

## REFERENCE DOCUMENTS

STATUS CODE **2** DECISION DECISION DATE PRIORITY ACTION REPORT:

AGENCY UPR ACTION ASSIGNED **RDC** SUSPENSE **6/21/2007** DOC SUSPENSE: **7/5/2007**

SUSPENSE COMPLETE ACD COORDINATION LA SA SAF SN

PAGES **2** ENCLOSURES **0**

SUSPENSE STATUS

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**OSD 09712-07**



BRUCE L. BRALEY  
1ST DISTRICT, IOWA

VETERANS' AFFAIRS COMMITTEE  
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on  
Economic Opportunity

OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT  
REFORM COMMITTEE

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209 W. 4th St., Suite 104  
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Phone: (563) 323-6988  
Fax: (563) 323-6231

**DUBUQUE DISTRICT OFFICE**

1050 Main Street  
Dubuque, IA 52001  
Phone: (563) 557-7789  
Fax: (563) 557-1324

February 14, 2012

The Honorable Leon Panetta  
Secretary of Defense  
1000 Defense Pentagon  
Washington, D.C. 20301

Dear Secretary Panetta,

I am writing today to commend the Department of Defense for their recent review of the Combat Exclusion Policy restricting the service of female members of the U.S. Armed Forces. While the decision to loosen the restrictions on women serving in combat is a good step forward, the review can and should go further to remove all of the barriers in place.

The last decade of war in Iraq and Afghanistan has proven that women are more than capable of serving in the combat arms. Since 2001, despite standing prohibitions on women in combat, a number of American women have distinguished themselves in combat earning numerous military awards. Female combat pilots, allowed to serve in those roles since the mid-90s, have proven themselves flying sorties in support of operations around the world. Most recently, Female Engagement Teams in Afghanistan have been a vital part of our counterinsurgency effort to better connect with the female civilian population.

The Department's review can and should go further to promote equality by permitting those women who are willing and able to serve in combat roles. The last decade should remove any question on the ability of women to serve and arguments against their service are nothing more than bureaucratic blustering at its worst. Despite claims to the contrary, one needs only look at the list of promotions by the military services to recognize that advancement to the highest echelons of command is tied to experience in the combat arms. In the over 200 years of our nation's history, only two women have been nominated to 4-star command positions. To truly ensure equality in our armed forces, women must be allowed to fight.

I appreciate your attention to this matter, and look forward to your continued work to reform the Department of Defense to ensure that we have the best fighting force that

<http://braley.house.gov/>

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SECNAV ADMIN

2012 FEB 27 PM 4:10

we possibly can, and that we are not turning away qualified and capable warriors for any reason.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Bruce Braley".

Bruce Braley  
Member of Congress

Cc: Dr. Jo Ann Rooney, Acting Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness